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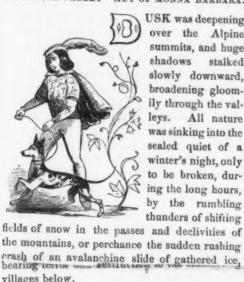
## BIANCA: —OR— THE STAR OF THE VALLEY.

A Romance of the Alps.

BY AUGUSTINE J. H. DUGANNE.

### CHAPTER I.

AN ALPINE VALLEY—HUT OF MONNA BARBARA.



fields of snow in the passes and declivities of the mountains, or perchance the sudden rushing crash of an avalanche slide of gathered ice, bearing down with a roar and a roar below.

Near the base of a steep precipice, the rocky side of which served for one of its walls, was a rude hut, constructed of roughly cemented stones, with a roof partly sheltered from the weather by the gnarled convolutions of thick vine, running rankly up the sides of the precipice, and spreading in an almost impervious mass over the top and eaves of the building. From the single small and unglazed window of this hut, streamed a light, as of a glowing fire.

Other lights were scattered along the line of the sheltered valley, glimmering from the casements of peasants' cottages, wherein at this hour the humble but contented denizens of the hamlet were busied in the preparation or hearty enjoyment of their evening meal; and one light, brighter than any of the rest (and nearer to the mountain pass which formed the southern outlet to the vale) gleamed from the dwelling of old Nicolo, a famous hunter-guide, well known throughout the Alpine districts. This light was, in truth, something more than an ordinary beacon; for it could be distinguished from afar, upon the peaks, and was, moreover, nightly trimmed and tended by the hands of Nicolo's fair grand-child Bianca, allowed by common consent to be the rustic queen of all the valley maidens.

But we have immediately to do with the hut first mentioned, built under the steep precipice, and half-covered with tangled vines, which was situated only a few hundred yards from the more capacious and comfortable cottage of Nicolo. It was occupied by three persons, an aged woman, who bore not the best of reputations among the villagers; while the crone herself buried her aged hands in collecting every sort of herb from the hills, which, after carefully cleansing and drying, she made into small bundles, and sold at the summer fairs and festivals. Perhaps it was the poor dame's habit of clambering up the rocks, and hobbling over the valleys, in search of her herbal treasures, duly plucking them at their full time of ripeness, whether such occurred at noon or midnight, that first inspired the superstitious peasants with an impression of her supernatural connections. Besides, it is a well-known fact, that when poverty is united with extreme ungraciousness in the person of an old female, the young and thoughtless have ever been willing to add to the poor creature's afflictions the stigma of dealing with the evil one; whereas, it will

generally be found, on inquiry, that a great deal more ground exists for suspicions of the sort, when the object of them is quite young and handsome, since there is surely more danger to be apprehended from the attractions of youth and beauty than from the absence of both.

This was, at least, the reasoning of the good friar Ambrose, the spiritual director of the valley, on an occasion when the zealous peasants were disposed to amuse themselves, and establish their orthodoxy, by resorting to stringent measures in order to test the genuineness of Monna Barbara's faith in the church; for not only had the offence of devil-dealing been imputed to the unfortunate old woman, but she was likewise charged with being a Lutheran—a character which, in the eyes of the worthy peasant, was little less to be dreaded than the veritable enemy of souls himself. Nevertheless, in spite of many cattle having died with the murrain, and two or three blights visiting the vineyards from across the German mountains, none took up with them her abode in the pleasant Val d'Oriazio (which was the name of the little district shut in by lofty hills, where she had continued to dwell to the present time); in spite of these things, we say, the old woman was acknowledged to be of great service among the inhabitants; and indeed, it was conceded that to her skill, in the preparation of herbal remedies, many a poor villager, wounded by accident, or stricken with fever, had owed his recovery from near the very gate of death. So, on the whole, though some extravagant folks, after drinking wine and walking in procession to church, were accustomed to denounce Monna Barbara as a witch and heretic, none of the better class of people ever thought of molesting the peaceful and innocent crone. And for her defence against the ignorant common people, it was well-known that the lad Berthold and Valentine, now grown into stalwart youths, were quite able to guard their humble domiciles against violence. Therefore, Monna Barbara pursued her business of gathering simples without much fear of the church, or its too-zealous adherents.

Berthold was the eldest of the two sons of Monna Barbara. He was a young man of stout frame, thick-set in person, with broad shoulders and endued with a strength which made him equal to great feats of labor during the vine-gathering season, and of course, rendered his services in much demand among the neighboring husbandmen. He was likewise skilful as a hunter, and accustomed to exertion and exposure during the inclement winters, making light of many hardships that deterred youths of less vigor and boldness from the pursuit of the chase, or the voracity of guide to travellers wishing to pass the dangerous portions of the mountainous chains that extended far beyond this valley to the frontiers of France, Switzerland and Germany. Berthold, sometimes alone, sometimes in company with his brother, had often traversed the entire route, and by this means, together with their summer labors, the youths had always kept themselves above the reach of want. Yet, though his capabilities and courage were allowed to be great throughout the valleys, Berthold was no favorite among the villagers, and many evil things were conjectured about him, which often, as in the case of his mother, were quite ill-founded. His general demeanor, indeed, was not prepossessing, and his features contributed little to produce a favorable impression on acquaintance. He had small, piercing eyes, constantly roving in wandering glances, and seeming to scan the thoughts of those who encountered their regards. His complexion was warty, and the expression of his face scornful and repulsive. Indeed his looks appeared to convey a consciousness of his unpopularity, and to intimate at the same time that he despised and despised those who were imminent to him.

Valentine was very unlike Berthold. The eyes of this young man were dark and bright, but they were likewise large, and looked out from beneath his forehead with a clear and earnest expression. Like Berthold he was strongly built, and taller in frame than he, with a more

graceful and easy carriage. But his smile was free and open, while the other's was covert and scornful, as though mirth were a weakness he despised. Berthold was habitually haughty and unmoved, while Valentine's temper was impetuous, and his actions sudden and often violent. But the young men of the valley, or pose as they were to intimacy with the older, were ever favorably disposed to the younger of these two sons of Monna Barbara; and so consequently, Valentine, from his childhood, had been accustomed to mingle in the sports and feasts of the youthful villagers, while Berthold withdrew himself at all times from the merry meetings of the valley, as if conscious of the aversion with which he was regarded.

The brothers now sat together before a blazing fire in the single apartment of their humble dwelling, whilst, to and fro, preparing the evening meal, the old Monna Barbara hobbled on her aged limbs. In the light of the burning fagots this woman's face appeared very ancient and ghastly. In truth, she was at this time full three score years of age. Nevertheless, her small black eyes were still quite sparkling, and though her hair was white as snow, her teeth were neither discolored nor decayed. Altogether, Monna Barbara was a singular-looking old personage, with her thin silver locks, sharply-bright eyes,

well-known to have little natural feeling," rejoined Valentine.

"Ha, ha!" ejaculated the gloomy Berthold, with his customary contemptuous laugh.

"You think to provoke me," said the younger brother. "You have a mind to quarrel with both of us, were I to heed your brutality. Never shall my brother of mine, bark ye—your mother, shall not be treated with disrespect."

"Who taught you all this fine language, my valiant stripling?" Are you indebted to old Nicolo for the lesson?"

Valentine remained silent, but he bit his lips, nervously, to keep down his rising passion.

"Or, maybe, his pretty grand-daughter was so good as to teach her handsome young neighbor!" continued Berthold, with a sneer. Valentine still made no reply.

"Faith! the boy has lost his tongue. Without doubt, it has followed his heart, and the pretty Bianca is now—"

"Have a care what you say concerning her," exclaimed Valentine, suddenly losing his temper, and speaking in a loud key.

"Doubtless, I shall say whatever I like, without troubling permission of Valentine," restored the younger brother.

"Then your bull-head shall feel this goad," exclaimed the younger brother, lifting his arm,

enormous demeanor of Valentine, who had just plucked away his antagonist's weapon. "Your hand at your own brother's throat, and your knife bare, too! For shame! for shame, lad! I thought not the like of you!"

Saying these words, the old guide advanced into the bovel, followed by the stranger who had appeared with him upon the threshold. This latter was a man of tall stature, and goodly mien. He was enveloped in a mantle of rich sable, fastened with clasps of massey silver, wrought in the form of lion claws. This gentleman surveyed the countenance of Valentine, with the same fixed attention that had been bestowed by Nicolo, and evidently with similar surprise; for the face of the young man had now lost its defiant expression, and being of naturally prepossessing cast, as we have before said, presented a strong contrast to the threatening appearance it had worn so lately. Valentine discovered instantly the faint light in which he now stood with his friend Nicolo, and hastened at once to explain the circumstances. But Berthold, assuming a very calm voice and manner, anticipated his brother's intention.

"It is always thus," said the crafty fellow, with an appealing look towards the old guide. "The unhappy temper of this brother of mine, whose violent outbreaks are too well known, puts us in continual fear for our lives!" Saying this, Berthold turned about, and scowled ominously at Monna Barbara, in order to frighten her, so that she would not venture to contradict his assertion.

"It is bad—it is bad!" said old Nicolo, gravely. "When brothers quarrel, and that, too, in the presence of a feeble mother, it bodes no good to either."

"But, hear me!" exclaimed Valentine, who crafty brother of mine has said is falsehood!"

"There—do you not perceive, his violent temper cannot be restrained!" interrupted Berthold, calling the notice of Nicolo and the stranger to the features of Valentine, which had again become inflamed, whilst the youth's whole body trembled with passion.

"It is sufficient! Do not see the knife in his hand!" cried Nicolo. Then addressing Valentine, he continued: "Do not add a false accusation of your brother, to the sin of which you have been guilty."

Valentine at this speech was almost tempted to fly at his cunning brother, and finish the quarrel at once by some desperate action. But his better nature restrained him, and gulping down his anger with a violent effort, he turned towards Monna Barbara, who had shrunk into a corner, dreading the scowling looks of Berthold.

At this moment the stranger who, until now had stood in the middle of the hut, wrapped closely in his mantle, commenced speaking, in a full, manly voice, that immediately riveted the young man's attention. He ventured, at the same time, to glance at the speaker, and was surprised to encounter the other's clear eye fixed calmly upon his own, as if it were capable of penetrating to his inmost thoughts. Valentine experienced an unaccountable emotion at this, as if the stranger's glance were recalling to his memory some strange and forgotten passages of a former life, familiar yet indistinct, like the dim shadowings of a twilight dream.

Who has not felt it? that mysterious emotion, like the memory of a face once half disclosed in a morning-dream? What is it? Why will the tones of a voice which all outward circumstances convince us we have never heard before, awaken within our hearts a thrill as if a long-lost friend had whispered to us? Why will a flower, a bush, a landscape, that we suddenly encounter in wandering where our feet have never trod before, bring at once before our mental vision a scene which we knew was never beheld by our sensuous faculties in this life, yet rise clear and distinct as a memory of yesterday? Is it to be imagined that our spirits, long, long, at a period in eternity's grand march, of which our finite comprehension can define no conception, performed their parts even as now—experienced hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, and doubts, even as in the present? And may we believe that the apparent recognitions of things and localities, which dawn so inexplicably at times upon our minds, reveal to us glimpses of an antepast which should assure us of immortality? reveal to us the spots which some joy, experienced far back in pre-existence, has redeemed, through its perfections, from the general oblivion, reveal to us tones of some voice to which in the illimitable past our souls have listened with immortal gladness?

"Who thought, indeed, what speculation, shall compass the revolving life of universal matter—where it begins, where it becomes multifiform, where it is resolved again into formless chaos, or elemental nothing?"



and brandishing the ice-pole which he had been sharpening, and to the end of which he had affixed the ferule of pointed iron, with which such sticks are shot.

Berthold started from his stool, clutching the knife which he had been using, and seemed about to rush at once upon his brother. But the old dame hobbled forward, and grasped his arm, screaming:

"Take care of yourself, Valentine."

"Away with you, beldam!" muttered Berthold, fiercely. But Monna Barbara saw the knife glittering in the firelight, and she clung with closer grasp to his arm.

"Take that, then, for your interference!" cried the ruffian son, and he struck with his left hand a backward blow at the crone, so that she staggered and fell against the wall.

But Valentine, by this time, had grappled with his infuriated brother, and now, with dexterous twist he wrenches the knife from his hand, just as the aged mother was dashed to the earth.

At this moment, the door of the hut was opened from without, and two figures appeared upon the threshold. Valentine released his hold, for he recognized in the foremost old Nicolo, the hunter, grand-father of Bianca, whose innocent name had been the cause of the sudden collision.

"Ho! what is all this, young man!" exclaimed Nicolo, as he paused in astonishment on the door-sill, and surveyed the attitude and threat-

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE STRANGER.

PERHAPS the thoughts of the young vine-dresser of Val d'Orazio did not run into such unlimited speculations as these, into which we have been led by the suggestions of past existence, awakened through the singularity of attention with which the stranger regarded Valentine. Indeed, there was little time allowed the youth for metaphysical indulgence, inasmuch as he was called upon to listen to the very business-like words which reached his ear.

"I am in want of a guide over the mountains, and as the good Nicolo here cannot conduct me farther than the second pass, it is necessary that another should accompany us, to continue with me the route. I am recommended to make my choice of one of you."

Berthold here broke in abruptly, though with no vehemence of manner. "I know every foot of these mountains, my lord," said he—"ay, for that master the routes are alike familiar to me, from the French passes to the Salzios Alps."

"Ay, then, thou must fain have travelled considerably in thy life-time!" said the stranger, transferring his keen glance to the elder brother. "Doubtless, the pass of the Boccheta is likewise well-known to thee!"

"I have skipped over its snow-drifts a dozen times perhaps. Nay, good fathers of St. Bernard, they know well, my lord, and frown this valley to the glacier of Tyrol, there is no place I have not footed, save only the White Mountain itself."

"Thou hast not, then, ascended Mont Blanc?"

"For reason, my lord, that the guides of Chamonix are jealous of us who dwell near the French borders, and mislike our conducting travellers with full purses, and generous withal, as my lord himself is."

As Berthold said this, he made a grotesque attempt to smile graciously, to show the earnestness of his compliment. But his flattery seemed to produce upon the stranger an effect quite contrary to that intended; for the latter turned abruptly from Berthold, and resuming his survey of Valentine, said, in a sable tone :

"In spite of thy brother's experience, and the scene in which I beheld thee engaged as I entered, I am disposed to trust thee for a guide sooner than he who has traversed all the Alps to the Swiss summits. What sayest, young man? Canst guide me to the Boccheta?"

"Valentine has been there thrice," here interposed Monna Barbara, who had remained silent in her corner till this moment. "He will lead my lord safely."

The stranger started suddenly, as the first tones of the old woman's shrill voice reached his ear, and he peered into the smoky nook where Monna Barbara had ensconced herself. The crane had half risen, and was eagerly stretching forward her long neck, disclosing the shrivelled face, bright eyes, and white teeth in the flickering glare of the burning embers on the hearth. Never, perhaps, had this old mother presented a more witch-like appearance than at this moment, and it was doubtless no wonder that the tall stranger should start and change color at the almost unearthly apparition, accompanied with the sudden tones of a cracked voice. He quickly recovered himself, however, in so far covering that the crane was the mother of the young man, though he could not help feeling a very uncommon sensation thrill through his frame as he encountered the look which Monna Barbara cast at him.

"Valentine will conduct you safely, signore," repeated the old woman; "to the Boccheta, to the Simplon, to Mount St. Gotthard—to the Tyrol Alps, if it like you, where the boy first drew mortal breath."

"He was born in Switzerland, then, good mother!" said the stranger, interrogatively.

"Both of them, signore, and stretched their first legs where the eagles build their nests, and the wild goat suckles its kids. Never fear, signore, but Valentine will lead you safe, though the slides be not far distant, as I know full well, by the moanings to-night."

"The moanings, good mother? What be those?"

"I hear things, and see things, that young ears and young eyes may wait long for," answered the crane, energetically. Old Nicolo, however, who had listened in silence to the colloquy, now interposed with an explanation.

"Monna Barbara, it is well known, signore, can tell when the slides are about to come. She thinks she can hear the huge masses of snow sinking in the clefts and gullies, with a great smothered sound, like to some one moaning in pain."

"And who says me say?" cried the old woman sharply. "Did I not bid Jacopo Landi flee away from his house, when the frost and his family were sleeping soundly, at the avalanche trembling above?" He laughed at Monna Barbara forsooth, and what came of it? "Where was his horse, and himself and his wife, at the breakneck?"

"It is very true," replied old Nicolo, solemnly. "I did not gainay your knowledge, good Monna—for well I know that gother Piero Boccheta owed his safety to your timely warning, which he did not make light of, like Jacopo."

The crane seemed satisfied by this admission of the old guide, and drew back her nook without speaking, whilst the stranger tapping Valentine lightly, said :

"Get thee ready, youth, then, for our journey. We shall fain be many miles hence before sunrise."

Valentine looked at the speaker with a grateful smile, which added much interest to his naturally pleasing countenance. But as he proceeded hastily to array himself for the road, he heard Berthold mutter to the stranger :

"Take heed the youth's pleasant face deceives you, not signore."

"I require no judgment but mine own, good signore," replied the keen-eyed traveller, as he turned toward the door. Nicolo was about to follow, when Berthold, concealing his resent-

ment at the contempt with which he was evidently regarded, detained the old guide, addressing him, with one of his low laughs :

"What think you, Nicolo, raised the hand to-night in my good brother yonder?"

"I care not for the cause," returned the hunter. "It is a shame for both of you!"

"Nevertheless, I'll make bold to tell you," said Berthold, not in the least abashed by the new rebuff. "I will tell you, out of friendship, that you may keep watch of your household."

"What mean you by that, young man?" asked Nicolo, pausing at once, to listen to what Berthold had to say.

"I mean this," returned the other, in a blunt way, like an honest man, desirous of making short work of an unpleasant duty—"I mean, that it was because I mentioned the name of your grand-child, Bianca, and for no other reason, that this hot-blooded young man quarrelled with me."

"And what said you of Bianca?" asked Nicolo, quickly.

"I but rated the strippling for his boast that he loved the maiden," returned Berthold, with his cold laugh. "And moreover, I ventured to hint that a poor lad like himself, stood little chance in your favor, against all the young masters of the valley—not to speak of the intendants of the castle, and, maybe, the padrons, for that matter. Such things have been!"

"Peace, young man! What idle tale is this?" exclaimed the old guide. "Well—what more would you say? If it be true the boy loves Bianca!"

"Ay, this is true! I do love her!" here suddenly interrupted the impetuous Valentine, who had overheard the last words of Nicolo, and now rushed forward. "From my heart do I love that gentle maiden," repeated he, clasping the hunter's hand in his own.

Nicolo appeared for a moment lost in amazement; then he exclaimed, in a sharp tone :

"You are crazy! The child has not been reared for such as you! Hold thy peace, I pray thee!"

With this speech, Nicolo shook off the young man's hand impatiently. Valentine turned away, a half-choked exclamation of angry feeling upon his lips, the flush of sudden indignation mantling his face.

"Take care, Nicolo!" said Berthold, whispering to the old guide, but loud enough for his brother to hear—"Take care! the young cub will not forget this slight!"

"No, Berthold! I shall not," murmured Valentine, with difficulty striving to preserve a calmness. "The time will come," continued he, turning toward the old hunter—"when you, Nicolo, shall repeat your words!"

The guide shrugged his shoulders, and moved to the door, without which, during this scene, the stranger in the mantle had been waiting. Then, Nicolo leading the way, the three took their departure from the hut.

Berthold watched their figures till they disappeared in the gloom, and then, returning to the fireside, vented his vexation in a curse at the poor mother, who had tremulously resumed her preparations for supper.

### CHAPTER III.

#### MOTHER AND SON.

"Ay, ay," muttered the crane, grumbly, as she moved back and forth, "ye may curse, but curses will never change what's to be."

"What is that you are saying, old beldam?" cried Berthold, overhearing his mother's words.

"What's to be, to which?"

"If I am wretched, it's the spell of fiends like you that made me so," rejoined Monna Barbara, in a louder voice, and pausing to confront her brutal son.

"Like dame like cub," cried Berthold, with his sneering laugh. "But pretty Valentine is no friend at all, I suppose, good wench?"

"Valentine is what he is—and Berthold is what he is," answered Monna Barbara. "But, flesh and blood of mine own, as you are, unnatural boy, Valentine will put his foot on you, sometime, I tell ye."

"Not without this knife-hilt deep in him," cried the elder son, with a savage gesture that made the mother retreat a step. "I know, old mother, that you favor Valentine more than me, and have always taken the young man's part against your first-born. But I'll be even with both of ye yet, or I'm no witch-born, as the villagers call me."

"They call you that, do they?" gasped the crane, writhing in recollection of the stigma which had for years clung to her like a pestilence, making her as it were a parish among her kind. "Well, well!" she continued, sinking her voice to a low murmur—"It's right—it's right! ill-blood is in both of us, and man's curse are not harder to bear than God's malediction!"

"Ill blood is both of us!" repeated Berthold, catching part of his mother's last speech. "What do you mean by that?" Is there no ill blood in white-faced Valentine?"

"The blood of the lion is not that of the wolf," answered Monna Barbara, using one of her customary figurative expressions.

"Look you, mother of mine," cried Berthold, starting from the stool on which he sat, and striding toward the old woman. "If you like not to see this baby of yours strangled, some day or other, you had best keep a quiet tongue in your mouth about his fine qualities. I doubt not, if your word could do it, that Valentine would be lord of the valley, and Berthold goatherd to his high mightiness!"

"And no more than right," interrupted Monna Barbara. "But she passes her speech, as she noticed the ominous blanching of Berthold's countenance, and continued in a lower tone; "What do I get from my eldest but blows and woes? Who raises me like a gaoler-slave, and calls me 'witch,' even as the vile archons of the town cry out after me, as I hobble through the market-place?"

"But who drove the pack of them before his stout arm, when they would fain have dragged the 'witch,' as they called her, to do penance on

the church stone? Who cudgled the churls of all the valley, giving no quarter till they promised to molest his mother no longer? Was it smooth Valentine, or the ill-blooded dog, Berthold?"

"Nay, nay, son Berthold, I said not that! No dog-blood runs in thy veins, Berthold," cried the crane, somewhat mollified by the recollection of her son's prowess in protecting her from the superstitious violence of the villagers. "But thy harshness sometimes makes me forgetful of speech."

"And who," resumed Berthold, heedless of the crane's interruption—"who searched for you from sun to vesper, when you were lost in the great snow—bawling his throat hoarse, and straining foot and hand, till he found you half-purified, and ready to perish at the bottom of 'Smuggler's Gulch'?" Was it Valentine or Berthold?"

"No more, no more, son Berthold! You are my child, whom I love, in spite of all things," exclaimed Monna Barbara. "It is bad blood that keeps us in trouble, for I warrant thou wouldst not see thy old mother harmed by strangers, quarrel as thou wilt with her thyself!"

"Not I," cried the son, with an oath. "But, when the younger Valentine..."

"Let us speak no more of him," said Monna Barbara. "He'll not be back to night, so break bread in peace, I tell thee, Berthold, and let us forget the bad humor of both of us."

So saying, the mother began to take out with a wooden spoon, from a pot at the fire, the *guazzeto*, which it contained—a mixture of meat, onions and vegetables, such as the French call *pot-pourri*; and with the addition of garlic, the Spanish peasants convert their *alcaprida*.

The savory cloud of steam which soon filled the hut, grateful to a sharpened appetite, began to exercise a benignant influence upon the evil temper of the young man, and in a few moments, with the brown banished from his forehead, he became busily occupied in discussing the merits of Monna Barbara's cookery.

The old woman did not partake of the repast, but contented herself with serving the *guazzeto* and black bread to her son, and setting before him an earthen bottle of thin wine, after which she retired to her corner near the hearth, where was a nook shaded by the abating stone which formed a portion of the fire-place, and there, sealing herself on a low block of wood, let drop her head into her hands, and watched her son, as he plied his vigorous appetite.

Berthold, on his part, seemed to do no further notice of his mother's presence, proceeding to dispatch his meal, till the mess of stew was sensibly diminished, and a crust of bread remained upon the table. Then lifting the jar of wine, he satisfied his thirst with a long draught.

Apparently this indulgence had restored to him his good humor, for as he rose from the table he said mirthily to Monna Barbara:

"Good mother, I am now going to take a short walk, as I have only a little business on hand to-night. So when you choose, you may go to rest, and leave me to come home when I am ready."

"You had better remain home, Berthold," replied Monna Barbara; "I like not both of you away all the long hours; and besides, an evil boding is upon my mind to-night, as danger threatened the household."

"Take your beads, then, and pray, for I must even be away, in spite of all presentments of danger. Belike a prayer or two might not be amiss for either of us."

"There is indeed need of prayer for both, son Berthold," said the mother. "Need that you won't not. But, get ye gone, if you will." My beads may as well be counted without you."

Berthold shrugged his broad shoulders, as the crane proceeded to remove the remains of his supper; but he said no more, till he had attired himself in a heavy cape of skin and woolen scarf, such as had been donned by Valentine ere he departed, and grasped his staff, preparatory to leaving the hut. Then, turning toward Monna Barbara, he asked :

"Do you recollect, mother, what our Valentine said to Nicolo, when I had the old man take care of harm from him?"

"The boy means nothing by his words," rejoined Monna Barbara.

"Ay, you'll take part with him, no doubt. Nevertheless, you head as well as I, that Valentine threatened old Nicolo that he should 'repent his words.' Mischief was meant there, good mother, I'll warrant me!"

"Berthold, Berthold! get thee away, and let me tell my beads!" Would that I dared pray our lady to put thee in better mind with all the world! But I fear me, no good will come of you!"

"Like dame like cub," cried Berthold, from the threshold, as he heard the crane's last words. Then with his usual scornful laugh, he hurried away from the hovel.

### CHAPTER IV.

#### THE STAR OF THE VALLEY.

The traveller in the cable cloth, with Valentine and the haunter guide, after leaving Monna Barbara's hut, pursued their way in silence till they reached the old man's cottage, which, as we have said, was distant only a few hundred yards. It stood at the opening of a wide gulch, through which, far up into the mountains, a narrow road extended, skirting the sides of great precipices, and winding beneath rugged walls of rock, whilst high over all, especially at this season of the year, immense shelves of snow and ice hung, apparently self-poised in the air, but ready at any moment to move in fearful avalanches upon the vales below. Through this pass, Valentine was engaged to guide the stranger some half dozen miles, to a place called the "Huguenots' Altar," and thence downward a half dozen miles farther to the north, till they reached the neighborhood of the great lower pass, called Il Boccheta, where, at the period of our story, the grand army of the French Republic, under the youthful General Bonaparte, was

engaged in forcing a passage through the Alps, into the heart of the Genoese territory, thence to overrun like a torrent the whole Italian land. Il Boccheta was then in possession of the invading army, with which, doubtless, the stranger was connected in some station of rank.

When the three arrived at Nicolo's small but neat and comfortable dwelling, they were met at the gate of a little paling which surrounded it by the sprightly figure of Bianca, who had opened wide the cottage door, disclosing the warm, inviting interior, with its white walls and floor, and shining hearth, on which blazed a genial fire. The apartment was rendered more brilliant still by the light of a large triangular lantern of thick glass, fixed against the cottage window that looked towards the mountain-path. This lantern not only irradiated the cottage, but illuminated with its outward streaming rays the dark walls of rock for quite a distance upward.

Bianca herself was the true light of old Nicolo's home, and the beacon which, more than the lantern or freight, conducted him homeward with anxious heart, from every mountain journey. For in truth she was a gentle and loving maiden, with a heart full of all guileless feeling, and thoughts pure as the mountain snows. Beautiful wifely was she, at least so thought her grandfather; and for the matter of this, all the youths, in a score of miles around, were of the same opinion, which they would have gladly revealed to Bianca herself, had she permitted them so much freedom. But the old hunter's fair grand-child was far from encouraging the gallantries of the youths, choosing rather to be called Nicolo's "Star of the Valley," which was the fanciful name of her affection which had been bestowed upon her by her watchful tending of the beacon light for him, almost since she was a baby, than to be known by any appellation that a stranger could bestow upon her.

Nevertheless, a shrewd observer might have suspected, from the sudden flush which overspread the maiden's cheek, as she recognized in her grandfather's company the handsome young neighbor, Valentine, that there might, after all, be such a thing as a heart in the old one's breast, and that such a heart was not entirely white. Perhaps, unfortunately, Nicolo noticed this for he quickly said to his grand-child: "My staff, Bianca! I shall go a mile or two with the stranger. It is a mild night, and the walk will do no harm."

Then, holding the cottage-door half-open, he waited for the maiden to bring the long, iron-bound pole, which the guides and hunters of the Alpine districts are accustomed to carry with them in all their journeys. Indeed, the passage of ridges and chasms in the ice, without such an instrument to support or steady the steps, would not only hazardous, but very likely, impossible.

The young girl soon equipped her grandchild with everything requisite for his short expedition, not, however, without stealing a glance at Valentine, which was returned by a tender look that plainly discovered the poor youth's situation to be beyond a cure. Old Nicolo did not remark this interchange of regards; nevertheless, as Valentine and the stranger passed him departing from the cottage, the grandfather lingered a moment, and said in a low tone to the maiden:

"I have something to speak to thee about, when I return, Bianca; and I trust to find thee dutiful to my wishes."

As the old guide spoke, he made a slight inclination of his head, in the direction which Valentine had taken; and poor Bianca felt her young heart overshadowed at once with the foreboding of her guardian's opposition to a love which was already in possession of her heart. She dropped her eyes sadly, as she reflected:

"I hope ever to be dutiful, my dear father!"

"Bless thee, Bianca! bless thee!" murmured the old man, kissing her forehead. "Then, grasping his staff, he hurried after the other pedestrians, who had commenced ascending to the mountain pass.

Bianca watched them, till they had passed the point where the lantern's last rays extended, and she could no longer discern her grand-father's figure, nor the tall form of Valentine, whom she loved in secret as well as he loved her.

### CHAPTER V.

#### THE MULE-PATH INN.

The vine-dresser Berthold departed from his dwelling, leaving Monna Barbara to carry out her pious intention of saying a few almost-forgotten aves upon her wooden beads; for, in truth, as she was a staunch Catholic, or he might not have been so doubtful of her necromantic character; though, sooth to say, Monna Barbara seldom darkened the door of the village church with the shadow of her ugly person—a laxity of discipline very excusable, however, when the crane's ungrainy reputation was taken into consideration.

We may therefore without immediate comment permit Monna Barbara to follow out the dictates of her serious inclinations, contenting ourselves with following the steps, or rather strides, of her promising son Berthold.

These were not directed toward the valley slope, whence glimmered so many beacons of domestic life, from the windows of huts and snug cottages, neither did they conduct in the opposing quarter, where diverged the mountain roads lately taken by Valentine and his companions. But, striking abruptly from the main road through the village, about two hundred yards below the cottage of Nicolo, the young man bent his course along a rugged pathway which brough-

ing into the rocky recesses that formed the first strata of mountain above the narrow but luxuriant plateau, wherein were situated the vineyards cultivated by the valley peasants. Keeping this pathway, which wound deviously through rough and stony fields, ascending gradually into the heart of the hilly region, Berthold at length reached a wide-mouthed cleft or chasm severing the stony pathway, and apparently cutting off all further progress in the direction he was pursuing. The black depth of this fearful fissure presented an appalling contrast to the white rocks on either side, over which now fell a shower of moonbeams, brightening the icy garments which clothed the mountain cliffs, till it flashed like silver armor on a giant's frame. Far down, many hundred feet beneath, was Berthold near the spot; and at once a multitude of echoes answered the sound of his descent, doubled and redoubled by the sonorous walls of rock, until the gathered clangor roared in the lowest depth, and then sank mutteringly away, leaving the desolate scene to resume its silent grandeur.

The vine-dresser paused a moment as the noises multiplied and died away, not in alarm, for he was too accustomed to Alpine existence to be startled byught less than the convolution of an avalanche; but simply, as it appeared, to direct his sharp glances across the range of hills that shut in the Val d'Orioso. This mule-path was not in much repair as a secure road for chance travellers, inasmuch as rumor had given to the peasants that the roadsides inn, situated on a lonely shelf near a mountain mule-path, penetrating far into the interior of the range of hills that shut in the Val d'Orioso, was infested by brigands, whose exploits inspired terror throughout the valley district, were inaccessible fortresses in some of the many impregnable defiles in the neighborhood, and that it was from such a position they were used to salve upon the foot roads leading to the neighboring city, attacking large companies of travellers, and often engaging boldly and sometimes dispersing the very soldiers sent out to apprehend them.

Whether true or false these rumors relative to the intrepreneur of the robbers in these particular regions, it was very certain that suspicious fellows, not belonging to the village, had often presented themselves at the fairs and church-festivals, and that, in more than one Sunday homily, the worthy padre had warned his youthful hearers (especially the female portion) against lending ear to any strange trafficker.

However, we have directly to do with Berthold, the vine-dresser, rather than with goatherds or smugglers, and must follow him as he suddenly turned to the left, after his rapid glance over the chasm, and commenced to descend cautiously an abrupt winding of the path which led down the sides of the precipice to a rude bridge that spanned the gulf, some twenty feet beneath. Crossing this bridge, found the supporting trunks firmly together with vines, but which yet swayed somewhat, as his heavy foot trod upon it, the young man soon found himself on the opposite brink, and continued his course descending the mule-path in the direction of the lonely alberg.

Lone, however, as this roadside tavern had appeared from the point above, Berthold discovered, as he approached, that its public room was now occupied by more than one guest, as was plainly evident from the sound of noisy mirth within. At least a dozen voices seemed vieng to what should be heard, and a chorus of some wild drinking song was just in full swell as he reached the closed door and knocked boldly with his staff.

The summons had an instantaneous effect upon the revellers within; for suddenly every sound was hushed, and deep silence took the place of uproar. At the same moment, a female voice came from a small, diamond-shaped aperture in the barred window-shutter (whence had proceeded the only light visible), demanding in sharp accents:

"Who knocks?"

"Assuredly a friend to the house, good Brigitta. Open the door, *mi m' ostoressi*, to a weary traveller."

"'Tis the vine-dresser," Berthold heard the woman say, as if in reply to an inquiry from some one within, and then the rough tones of a man called out:

"Art alone, friend?"

"Truly I am, Baco, and thirsty for a cup of wine, with such good company as one meets at your snug fireside."

As Berthold concluded this remark, a bar was removed from the inside of the massive door, and he presently found himself in the midst of his desired "good company."

A motley assemblage was this, picturesque and wild-looking enough to satisfy any sketch-hander who ever straddled a travelling stool in the

# The Flag of our Union.

219

Apennines or Abruzzi. Nearest the door, and the first to encounter his glance as he entered, Berthold beheld the portly *secreta*, or landlord, of the hotel, whose name he had called on before his admittance. Bacco was short, thickly-built, with a bold-neck set so solidly upon his broad shoulders that the latter rose somewhat like haunches on either side. His face was a compound of pugnacity and stupidity, the stolid look of which was only enlivened by an occasional glint of his small eyes, which from beneath their heavy brows sometimes volunteered a hint that under their owner's apparent dullness might be sleeping a disposition whose quietness it would scarcely be safe to trust too far. This personage greeted the young man, without rising, or foregoing his hold of an earthen flagon which he had just raised to his lips, and from which he proceeded to imbibe a copious draught.

Opposite to the burly Bacco, stood, with her arms bent, and her hands resting on her hips, a sour-visaged, ill-favored woman, of tall figure and thin frame, who rejoiced in the name of Brigita, and the possession of Bacco as her worse but larger moiety. This good lady bent on Berthold the regards of a pair of scrutinizing eyes, which plainly showed that the vine-dresser was no especial favorite of hers, whatever he might be of the *oste* himself.

Grouped about the apartment in such attitudes as their custom, or ease dictated, were a dozen men, at the least, clad in the various garbs of muleteers, mountaineers, and goatherds, though the former appeared to predominate. These people were drinking wine, and eating sausages and black bread, at the same time talking loudly, and singing at intervals verses of some rude song, generally illustrative of the charms of just such meetings as the one in which they were now mingling; though sometimes the ballad took an amatory or adventurous turn, and recited the woes of a mountain girl, or exploits of her mountain lover. At the upper end of the room, which was of considerable capacity, was a door leading to an inner apartment, toward which Berthold at once made his way, at a sign from the ponderous Bacco, which assured him that a person whom he sought was in the alberg.

The door alluded to was wide open, and as the vine-dresser reached it, he beheld, just at the other side of the threshold, a small table, at which two persons were seated, amicably sharing a bottle of wine between them, whilst the odor of an aromatic cigar flavored this portion of the alberg with a more agreeable effluvium than that exhaled from the sour wines and stale meats disseminated by the company at large.

The first of these companions, whose position exposed his face to Berthold as he gained the door, was a man attire rather jaunty, in a jacket of green broadcloth, set off with broad lapels, to which heavy silver buttons gave an appearance of gaudiness, that was hardly kept in countenance by the rest of his garb. This latter was made up of well-worn and discolored leather breeches, coarse boots, exhibiting ugly thongs, fastening them to the legs, which were now stretched out at length over the floor, and a short embroidered cloak, evidently of something to this a texture for an Alpine temperature, however it might comport with the gay jacket beneath. The proprietor of this costume, was an individual of at least forty years, tall and well-shaped, with gray, curly hair, depending upon his shoulders, and with a countenance expressive of much determination.

The second person at the table, whose head was quickly turned about as Berthold's shadow fell across the threshold, was a young girl, whose small, compact figure was tastily arrayed in a close-fitting bodice of dark velvetine, beneath which a petticoat of dark brown stuff, trimmed with ribbons of a lighter shade than that of her upper garment, fell to the tops of small, fur-trimmed boots, that displayed to advantage the well-shaped feet which they covered. The face of this young girl, as it appeared half-turned towards the young man, was of a fine oval form, and of pure olive complexion. Her forehead was encircled with a sort of coronet of common but quite brilliant blue beads, well contrasting with the glossy, black rings which they confined, and perhaps borrowing lustre from a pair of flashing eyes that looked out fearlessly beneath them.

Berthold's glance, which had sought that of this young girl, as soon as he perceived her eyes turned toward him, sank the next instant before their fixed gaze, and his voice faltered in a measure, as he addressed the other occupant of the room, with:

"Good evening, *il mio capitano*!"

"Good welcome to you, if you bring news of business, and a draught of good wine, whether or no," returned the man with the gay jacket. "Sit down, *il mio amico*, and Francesca here will fill your cup of Muscat. 'Tis the last of my delicate *vino d'est*, and the saints only know where I shall get more of the same—if in truth I be not soon reduced to no wine at all, which may St. Germonio long avert!"

Saying this, the worthy proprietor of the short cloak and green jacket crossed himself devoutly, and then continued in a lower tone to the vine-dresser, who was receiving a cup of wine from the hands of the young Francesca:

"And is there nothing promising at all, worthy Berthold?"

"May I speak before your daughter?" asked the vine-dresser, in the same key, throwing a glance toward the girl, who, after filling his cup, had risen from the table, and was now directing her gaze into the outer room.

"And why not before Francesca?" rejoined the other. "She is able to keep her father's secrets, I'll warrant."

"I but spoke on account of—" commenced Berthold, but he stammered, as he encountered the glance of Francesca turned suddenly upon him.

"Tot, comrade! go on with your news, and may the saints grant it bring fortune!" cried the father.

"I doubt me not it will, if it be taken advantage of at once," answered Berthold, in the blunt manner whi he could so well assume. "The news I have is this—that a traveller, who is evi-

dently a signore of distinction, and I doubt not has a sack well-lined with what honest mountaineers can easily find purses for—is but now crossing the north pass, to the 'Huguenots' Altar,' and with our friends the good goatherds and muleteers yonder, you may make what he carries your own before daybreak."

"And know you what he carries, worthy Berthold?"

"I know that he has gold, and that in no silkies pouch, but a money-belt such as none wear but they who bear wealth when they travel. I watched closely, and I warrant me this strange lord carries more than has crossed those mountains in a many a mule-load that you have risked life to rifle, *il mio capitano*."

"And where saw this?"

"Under mine own roof, but a couple of hours since, whither my lord must come to show himself, and to engage my good brother Valentine to guide him on your journey. Old Nicolo is with them, but he goes no farther than the 'Huguenots' Altar.'

"And how long are they departed, say you?" inquired the other, whose vocabulary doubled by this time was derived by the astute reader. As he asked this question, he emitted a short, hissing sound from his lips; which was immediately responded to, by a sudden bustle in the large apartment, and the appearance, a moment after, of three or four men in muleteer garb, at the open door.

"Arm and make ready," was the short command given by the captain, whose countenance had assumed a stern and resolute expression. The men at once retired, and the girl Francesca began to assist her father in his hurried preparations.

"Your brother is to guide this stranger, said you, Berthold?"

"Ay, captain; and as the boy is of some spirit, it were best if—"

"Ah, fearing nothing on that score! I know what you would say, good Berthold; but fear nothing, for no hair of the lad's head will be hurt—he neither the traveller's, for that matter. I am too old now, to spill blood wantonly; we will but relieve the signore of his money-belt, and bid him godspeed on his journey."

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"We repeat to state that our old respondent above, is now sinking under consumption."

[Written for The Flag of our Union.]

TO CONSUMPTION.\*

BY JOSEPH H. BUTLER.

Harp of wild song! Upon the wavy tree  
I now suspend my bow, for I hand no more  
My work is numbered, and the day of yore;  
The same blast of sickness sweeps o'er me.—  
My eye is gazing on the spirit shore.  
My soul now contemplates the awful flood  
That rolls its waves between me and my God;  
But merrily sun-bow spans those waters o'er.

Consumption, hall! with thy false cloak of bloom,  
Thy steps are in the palace and the cot;  
Thy fingers draw a wreath of pale to blot!  
Thou wast born to gay bower a wreath of gloom.  
Since it must be—approach, thou dredest one!  
Yet come not near me, tempest of bone;  
Marie—I crave—if memory yet may be,  
Before my soul the words of destiny is done.

Tooe often I have seen the shadowy hand  
Of death young beauty claim, and leave the steem,  
And leave the bridal shadow.  
They victims are the brightest of the land!

Unhappy genii, formed of fragile clay,  
Blossoms full oft to die, like buds in spring,  
When sweeps the north blast, like wing,  
Death shatters their tender petals fast away.

Deceiver dread! 'tis thine alone to trace  
The rose-tint on the cheek of sickly pale;

Whispering to loving hearts a flattering tale—  
For death is where thy rose holdeth place.

Most softly would it steal from life away,  
Like a soft whisper, like a gentle sigh;

Father of mercy! may it be thy will  
To grant thy spirit the springs of life decay!

Tooe often I have seen the shadowy hand  
Of death young beauty claim, and leave the steem,

And leave the bridal shadow.  
They victims are the brightest of the land!

There may my rambling spirit wing its flight  
To worlds unknown—elsewhere to rove and rest,  
While my loved ones last—forever best,  
Matched in mortal radiant at the light.

There dwells within that spirit-land on high,  
Where live the blessed by the foot of joy,  
Her—whose cruel fingers did destroy;  
Above her dust the winds and billows sigh.

On deep midnight's sombre-breathing air,  
Come sounds like harp-sounds sad, yet O how sweet;

With breaking day they pass—slay, too, feet!

O, it is hard to watch the hand of death,  
And feel thy chilling fingers day by day  
Touching life's tender sprout so low,

And watch the shivering leaves decay.

\* We repeat to state that our old respondent above, is now sinking under consumption.

[Written for The Flag of our Union.]

THE SYBIL'S PREDICTION.

BY HORATIO ALGER, JR.

LA VINETTE is a beautiful village. You might search through France, and hardly find a more hour before midnight, when the moon is at its height," remarked the old man, as he turned toward the outer room.

"I know Nicolo's pace very well," returned Berthold, "and the hour will vary many minutes from that you mention."

"We shall speedily overtake them, by the mule-path defin'd," rejoined the captain. "I give you many thanks, worthy youth, for this timely notice, and will bring more substantial means of rewarding you, my St. Germonio prosper. Now hast, Francesca, and fill flasks with the last of my *vino d'est*. You shall drink a glass, Berthold, before you return to the village."

"With all my heart, and thanks, *il mio capitano*," said Berthold. So saying, he received a second cup from the hands of the fair Francesca, and at the same instant a quick glance from her eyes, that appeared to communicate to the young man a sudden command, which he acknowledged by an avowed nod, and the spilling of a few drops of wine from his flagon.

"Have a care!" cried the captain, noticing the spilling of the liquor, though not the signs of intelligence exchanged by his daughter and the vine-dresser. "Have a care, youth! You find not such wine as this *vino d'est* in the cellars of Val D'Oraizo!"

"In truth," said the other, finishing his draught, and returning the flagon to Francesca, not without stealing another look at the young female. "Such wine gives jester and cloak in the coldest weather."

"Now for the road," said the captain, abruptly. "Without further delay, save to press a hasty kiss to Francesca's lips, as they were raised to his own, the old brigand passed into the outer apartment.

Not a single individual, save the host, of those who had crowded the room when Berthold arrived, now remained in the hotel, though they had appeared so disposed to rovaly, and vying with each other in exertions of vocalism. Bacco, however, still grasped his flagon of wine, and emitted clouds of tobacco smoke from his pipe, formed of Swiss clay, whilst his wife moved incessantly about, placing stools and tables in their places, after the evening's disorder.

The brigand captain knew very well where to look for the stout fellows whom his orders had drawn suddenly from their debauch, to await his signal for an expedition they knew not nor reckoned not whence. So, exchanging a brief sentence with Bacco, he tarried no longer in the public room than was necessary to complete his equipments with a beautiful, silver-stocked carbine, which the landlady Bright fetched him from a secure corner in which it had remained since his departure.

"Here, mother," at length said Lizette, of the gayest of the party, holding out her hand to the old crone, "you may tell me my fortune. But I must tell you beforehand, that you need not take the trouble to provide me with a husband, as I have vowed to be an old maid."

The sybil took the hand of the laughing maiden, and, after a single glance, fixed her penetrating eyes upon her.

"I see," she said slowly, "a bridal train marching slowly to the village church. Flowers are strown along the way, over which pass the bridal pair. Need I mention the name of the bride?"

Lizette drew back with a blush; the sybil was right, for on that day week she was to stand at the altar. Another took her place, and still another, till Marie alone remained.

"Come, Marie," said the girls, impatiently; "don't keep us waiting. We want to know what your fortune will be. It should be a good one."

Marie came forward and submitted her hand to the interpreter of fate. The sybil started, as if suspicious that her art had failed her. But a moment's survey dissipated her doubts and she murmured, as if to herself.

"Maiden, a brilliant destiny awaits you. You

will wed a title, and become the mistress of a fair estate. Servants shall be in waiting to do your bidding, and wealth will pour forth its choicest offerings at your feet. Such is the decree of destiny."

"Mother," said Marie, in extreme astonishment, "you have certainly read wrong for once. Such a fate is not for me, and I would not that it were. Enough for me that I settle down in the same position that I now occupy, surrounded by my friends and acquaintances."

"No master," said the sybil, composedly;

"you cannot change the course of events. Wait patiently for their unfolding. Be not apprehensive of evil, for this is the mouth-piece of fate. I may demand the fulfilment of your promise sooner than you think."

"I am much obliged to you, mother," said the latter, laughing, "for your favourable prediction, and when I become a countess, I will take care that you are provided for."

"You owe me nothing," was the reply. "I am but the mouth-piece of fate. I may demand the fulfilment of your promise sooner than you think."

"It is so, mother. When you are entitled to make it, be sure that I shall not withdraw from my engagement."

"When the sybil had hoisted away, richer, though not a little by her companions on the destiny which had been marked out for her.

"What shall it be, Madame La Duchesse, or Madame La Comtesse?" inquired Lizette, gay.

"I have a good mind," said Marie, "in return for your male, to seal away your Philip, and marry him myself. In that case, as least, the prediction—"

Lizette, who would have been very unwilling for Marie to attempt in earnest what she threatened in jest, thought it best to drop the bantering tone she had at first assumed. As for Marie, she thought little of the prediction. To her mind it was so altogether improbable that she did not think it worth while to waste a thought upon it.

The soil of La Vinette is somewhat uneven, though it contains no very high hills. In the northern part there is a little brook flowing over a rocky bed, with considerable impetuosity. Over this stream, which is, however, too shallow to be dangerous, there is a narrow footbridge for the accommodation of passengers.

It so chanced that about a week after the events above described, Marie, who was just returning from a visit to a neighbor, on the other side of the stream, had occasion to pass over the bridge. Doubtless her thoughts were pre-occupied, or she would have been more careful. As it was, her foot slipped when half way across, and she fell in. It was not a very serious affair, but she felt awkward enough, and vexed at the necessity which compelled her to wade through the water. She was quickly picked herself up, when a pleasant voice was heard at her side, saying: "Mademoiselle, permit me to escort you to the other side."

Marie looked up, and encountered the respectful gaze of a young man dressed in working attire, with a broad-brimmed straw hat upon his head. She had time, though it was but a moment, to perceive that he had fine black eyes, and a prepossessing countenance. Not being disposed to rudeness or coquetry, she accepted without hesitation the proffered aid, and was soon upon the bank.

"I am much indebted to you for your kind assistance," said she, casting down her eyes, for she could not avoid noticing that those of the young man were fixed upon her in admiration.

"There is no nothing in which you have offended me," said Marie, in a tremulous voice.

"I am glad of it," said Henrique, his face brightening, for it emboldens me to make still another request. I love you, Marie," he added, impulsively. "I love you most devotedly. You must have noticed it in my looks, and every action. Do you remember the evening when I sang by request a song, 'Know'st thou my love?' It was of my own composition, as I said. Did you not divine, dear Marie, that it was of you I was singing?"

Marie started with surprise, and a blush of pleasure mantled her features.

"Was it indeed of me that you were singing?"

"Marie did not finish the sentence. Henrique perceived at a glance that herein lay the secret of her apparent estrangement, but with true delicacy forbore to speak of it.

"May I hope," he asked, timidly, "that I am not wholly indifferent to you? I am poor, it is true, but the recent legacy of a relative has given me the means of supporting you in comfort."

"If you think me worth taking," said Marie, with engaging frankness, "you may have me."

When the engagement of Henrique and Marie became known, it was universally pronounced to be an excellent match. It was a mooted question which was the more fortunate, the bridegroom or the bride.

"I shall never more believe in fortune-telling," said Marie one day to Henrique, as she sat busily employed in preparations for her approaching marriage.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Because," was the reply, "it was foretold of me that I should wed a title, and become mistress of a fair estate."

"Was that the prediction?" he asked, in surprise. "Who told you?"

"A sybil who was passing through the village. But I put no credit in it. I told her that if ever it should come to pass I would provide for her."

"And are you sure that you do not regret the non-fulfillment of the prediction?"

"Can you ask?" said she, reproachfully.

It was the bridal morning. The sun shone out with more than ordinary splendor, as if to do honor to the occasion. Before the altar of the humble village church stood reverently Henrique and Marie, the white-haired priest pronouncing with trembling voice the sacred words which united them. The nuptial blessing was scarcely pronounced, when an old woman burst with infinite energy upon the aisle and stood before the bride.

"I have come to claim your promises," said she. It was the old southayer.

"But," said Marie, in a low voice, "it was dependent on my marrying a title. You see I have not done so. You were wrong."

"Rather," said the old woman, raising her voice, "is it you who are wrong, Madame La Comtesse?"

"What can she mean?" asked Marie, looking towards her husband with surprise.

"She is right, Marie," said he, gently. "In me behold not Henrique Armand, the possessor of much wealth, but of means less precious than yourself. Listen, and I will explain all. Being desirous of seeing country life, in its varieties, and mingling in it without being known, I found my way to your pleasant village. The rest you know. Will you forgive me?"

It is needless to say that pardon was accorded,

and that Marie graced the high station to which

she had been elevated. Her promises to the sybil

was fulfilled to the letter.

Know'st thou my love? Fall well I know  
No fair dwells beneath the sun;  
Ah! would that our divided lives  
Might in one peaceful current run.

The rich voice of the singer lent much sweetness to the simple words of the song. All applauded the effort—all except Marie. She stood apart from the rest with a pensive and abstracted air, and said nothing.

"Don't you like it, Marie?" asked one of her companions.

"It was very pretty," she replied in a constrained voice. "M. Armand is a good singer."

So saying, she went into the house, Henrique not appearing to notice the movement.

"But are the words true? Have you really a lady love, M. Armand?" asked a lively maiden of fifteen.

"Come, describe her. What does she look like? What is her name?"

You are altogether too fast," said the young man, smiling. "Don't you know that we poets are not obliged to adhere strictly to the truth. In fact I have usually noticed that those who are in love, are the very last to write songs about it. How do you know but it may be so with me?"

"I don't believe it at all," said the young girl, shaking her head. "You sang with too much feeling for that. Depend upon it I will find out who it is—this love of yours—if I can."

"It is well excepted," said Henrique. "I deprecate this too fast."

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# The Flag of our Union.

[Written for The Flag of our Union.]

## THE GOODLY REST.

BY JOHN K. HOLMES.

How few in all this strange sojourn,  
Sect not your heart to lean upon—  
Some trusting soul that can return  
Sweet words when other friends are gone?  
'Tis then—ah then, that worth grows  
Above the air pretest, the world's ends—  
'Tis then—ah then, that love will show  
Within these hearts, alike in each.

Life is, Indeed, a solemn stream  
Within whose current we must trace  
All that we are, & e'er have been.  
The good & ill that mark our race.  
And he alone a chain endures,  
Who with his groan thought only stays,  
And turns from all that love ensures,  
To mock and cry, all love betrays.

'Tis well that beats fast on the main  
Has one good hand that safely guides;  
One hand that has not come in vain,  
To trust the winds and stormy tides!  
'Tis well you long on the road,  
Holds back no tear, no never sigh;  
'Tis well for him whose peaceful door  
Can hide his life from Soly's eye.

'Tis well for him who can forgive  
The certain temptations of life;  
Who easily has given years to know  
The quiet charms devotion brings.  
And he is wise whom strange unrest  
Can tempt not o'er the world to roam;  
But loving one place, and not breast,  
Finds there a Christian heart and home.

[Written for The Flag of our Union.]

## MARRYING FOR A HOME.

BY MRS. M. E. ROBINSON.

"Oh dear, I don't know what to do about marrying Mr. Liston," soliloquized pretty Adelaide Southerland. "I really didn't think it was so difficult to make up one's mind, but I must, for he'll expect his answer to-night."

The fair speaker twisted another jetty ringlet over her finger, and mechanically gazed out of the window.

"Ask your heart, that will answer truthfully," suggested a voice of singular clearness from within.

Adelaide started; the monitor was so perfectly intelligible, that she fancied some one stood by her side.

"Mr. Liston is certainly very fine looking. I don't know that I ever saw a handsomer man," she continued, taking an elegantly cased daguerreotype from a toilet table, and minutely examining the features of the object of her thoughts. "Yes, he unquestionably has a *distingué* air."

"Good looks all that you require in a husband?" asked the invisible querist.

"I've heard some hints that his disposition was not the most amiable in the world, but I never observed anything of the kind. The report was probably started by some malicious young lady who is jealous of his attentions to me. But I hope it isn't true, for of all things I dislike cross people, and an ill-tempered husband would be positively undesirable."

"What is the nature of your feelings toward him?" pursued the internal voice, not yet disheartened by the total neglect and inattention it had thus far received.

"He is rich, and lives in very good style; that at least, will make up for other deficiencies. I suppose we ought not to expect perfection; Mr. Liston is, no doubt, a very good kind of a man."

"But do you love him?" inquired importunate conscience, who seemed determined not to be thwarted in her kind endeavors.

Adelaide paused, and the words, "do you love him," were again repeated with painful distinctness by the same unsmiling questioner.

"I must confess that I haven't any great affection for him, but that is of little consequence. Love is merely a chimera—an idle fancy that seldom or never outlives six months of matrimony. I'm just as well off without it as with it. Besides, they say love is blind, and if I marry with my eyes open, I shan't be apt to meet with much disappointment."

"Ah, Adelaide, that is fallacious reasoning—do not be led aside by such sophistry!"

Miss Southerland tapped the carpet impatiently with her small foot; she was inclined to be vexed with the monitor that would make itself heard.

"I want a home!" she responded, as if in answer, and her tone was more decisive than had yet used. "I want a home; it would be so nice to have a place which I could call my own. I don't like dependence, and I'm heartily tired of staying a week with Fanny, a fortnight with Laura, a few days with Bella, and being obliged to hear the advice of all three in regard to my saying and doings. Yes, I do need a home, and as Mr. Liston has offered me so good a one, I don't think I can do better than to accept it."

Adelaide did not stop to hear the whisper "that a home gained under such circumstances might not prove a happy one," but half fearing that her decision might be weakened by some untoward event, immediately sat down, put her answer upon paper, and sent it off, congratulating herself that the perplexing question was settled.

Adelaide Southerland was fatherless and motherless, and lived alternately with her three married sisters, who—as is often the case—respectively believed that the prerogative was theirs to govern in a great measure, her actions. That she was a bit of a coquette, we will not attempt to deny; and that these same ladies had spent a great deal of time and breath in urging their fickle-minded sister to make choice of some one of her many suitors for a husband, was just as true. But Adelaide confined to fire, until at length suspicion hinted that their advice might not be as disinterested as they would have it thought. "She was a wretched, double-faced, and they were trying to get rid of her, although they would not admit it in so many words. Yes, she would marry and be independent."

Now Miss Southerland had done her elder

sisters injustice; never, by word or deed, had they given her reason to suppose that she was an unwelcome recipient of their kindness. Their counsels were well meant, and they had her best interests at heart, and notwithstanding they were well pleased upon learning she was engaged to become the wife of Mr. Liston—who have considered an eligible match—they would have been mutually shocked to have discovered what the young lady so studiously concealed—that she contemplated marriage merely as the means whereby she should secure a permanent home.

Mr. Liston was a man between thirty-five and forty, and a widower; and though this fact and the additional circumstance of his having a young daughter, occasioned Miss Southerland no annoyance; having once been married, the gentleman could initiate her into the mysteries of housekeeping, and she had no fears but that she should prove an excellent step-mother. She would be conducted to an elegant residence, awaiting her presence, without the trouble of selecting carpets, choosing ornaments or examining furniture; she would be waited upon by obedient servants, and maintained in affluence, which last she considered the greatest desideratum.

Mr. Liston had been smitten with the pretty face, lady-like manner, and vivacious spirits of Miss Southerland, and was inclined to think she would make a very good wife. He accordingly proposed, and felt quite proud upon learning that he had been preferred to many younger though we may not say handsomer men; for as we have before hinted, Mr. Liston was a noble specimen of many beauty, and, strange to say, he was so well aware of it, that by the time the nuptial knot was indissolubly tied, he had come to think that he was conferring quite an honor upon the young lady in allowing her to bear his name.

Miss Southerland and Mr. Liston were united in church, and remained immediately after the performance of the ceremony to the residence of the latter, where a party of friends were assembled to offer congratulations to the newly wedded pair. Our heroine certainly appeared to good advantage as she moved easily and gracefully among her guests, in the happy consciousness of being mistress of a well-ordered and handsomely furnished establishment. She acted the hostess admirably, and more than once saw the eyes of her husband fixed upon her in admiration that indicated his entire satisfaction.

Adelaide was the happiest of the happy; her home was a delightful one, and though it was burdened with an incumbrance in the shape of a husband, he was both handsome and agreeable, which made the master assume a different aspect.

"How very neat and nice everything is!" exclaimed our heroine, the next morning, as she followed Mr. Liston, who was showing her about the premises. "You must have excellent domestic," she added, with a smile.

"So I flatter myself," was the polite rejoinder.

"That is fortunate, for I am but a novice in housekeeping, Mr. Liston. What a superb view of the harbor!" and Adelaide put aside a heavy curtain and glanced out of an upper window.

"You will have very little to do with the domestics, Mrs. Liston," said the gentleman, carefully disposing the damask folds as they laid it that a maiden aunt of mine lived with me most of the time, and you will find her in a very competent adviser and valuable auxiliary. By constant persuasion, she has consented to remain with us; but being somewhat indisposed last evening, she kept her room."

Adelaide did remember that he had once said something about an aunt who spent portions of her time with him, but that she was a permanent member of the family, she was not aware of. She would have preferred being alone, then the relative was probably a pleasant, motherly kind of a person, and would be of much assistance to her in her new round of duties; so she promptly answered, "that no doubt they should get along very well together, and be very good friends."

"She is an orderly lady, as you will perceive," continued Mr. Liston, "and in common with other people, has her whims and caprices, which I generally humor, as the wisest course I can take—for her habits are too confirmed to be easily changed."

Adelaide made no reply, but she felt some misgivings less these same whims might infest themselves too often; odd people were sometimes obstinate and hard to please. However, there was no use in borrowing trouble, and she nobly resolved to be so compliant and yielding that no fault could justly be found with her conduct.

"This is my private library, where I am inaccessible several hours in the day," he went on to say, opening a door which led into a small, neat apartment, well provided with articles of comfort and enjoyment in the form of books, papers, cigar-cases, lounges, etc.

"A little on the bachelor principle," laughed Adelaide, as she glided in and glanced with interest over her. "But how cozy it will be to shut ourselves up here out of the way of people, when we feel meditative, and wish to be free from interruption. I feel disposed to try that inviting lounge already."

"By the sound of that bell I believe we are wanted in another direction. Come, Mrs. Liston, let us to breakfast; I want to present you to my aunt," and with these words Mr. Liston gallantly offered his arm to his bride, and the pair sought the dining-room.

"Adelaide, this is Miss Barker, my aunt," said Mr. Liston, as our heroine found herself in the presence of a tall, thin lady, who touched her fingers very lightly by way of salutation, and spoke a few words in a cold, formal tone. Adelaide was embarrassed somewhat, for Miss Barker made no attempt to continue the conversation; her surprise was greatly enhanced by seeing the latter deliberately place herself at the head of the table, after pointing out the seat which the new wife was expected to occupy.

Adelaide's cheek flushed; she looked inquisitively at the sound of that bell I believe we are

wanted in another direction. Come, Mrs. Liston, let us to breakfast; I want to present you to my aunt," and with these words Mr. Liston gallantly offered his arm to his bride, and the pair sought the dining-room.

Adelaide was again disappointed; she was fond of children, and a great favorite with them; but it was easy to see that she would not be allowed to exert much influence over the mind of Rosa, though she had hoped to be the means of doing her much good.

Days sped on. Mrs. Liston was the bride of a month. She occupied precisely the same situation that she did on the day we followed her movements, having neither advanced nor retrograded. She felt very much like a visitor in a

strange house, and experienced none of the satisfaction she had promised herself when she had a "home of her own." It was surprising how many whims the maiden aunt made manifest, and in how many different ways they exhibited themselves.

Adelaide was hardly prepared for such a course of procedure as Miss Barker saw fit to adopt; for though never wanting in politeness or respect, the latter would not yield an inch of ground to the second wife. This state of things was unbearable to our high-spirited heroine; she chafed at the idea of being a mere cipher in her husband's household, where, by her, will should be shown. She could not complain of neglect or inattention on the part of the domestics, and Miss Barker was never lacking in courtesy toward her, which was, indeed, a stately Miss Barker, for though young and inexperienced, Mrs. Liston was a quick observer, and a good reader of character.

As Mr. Liston had business to attend to for the rest of the morning, his wife, although not quite sure but that she should have devoted the time to her repair to her own room. She employed an hour or two in arranging her wardrobe, and with a natural desire to know more about her home and a parlable curiosity to learn what was going on about her, she returned to the parlor, feeling quite confident that Miss Barker was already there, waiting to deliver up the keys, and give her such hints and instructions as her years and experience would warrant her in bestowing upon one who was a novice in the art of managing servants, and the other details of housekeeping.

To be sure, she had been somewhat disappointed in the maiden aunt, but she determined she would not be prejudiced against her, nor judge hastily; her manner might naturally be reserved and cold, and more constrained toward a stranger than any one else. Perhaps she had been disappointed in a matter of the attractions, and such a good disposition might have become sour and peevish; at any rate, it was best to be charitable. So Mrs. Liston went down, but Miss Barker was not to be seen. An hour was spent in turning over the leaves of books, running over an elaborately carved piano, pacing up and down over the thick carpet, and wondering why she was so entirely alone. No doubt Miss Barker was busy—for she had excused herself before Mr. Liston had left—but then she was both able and willing to assist her, and even anxious to relieve her of a part or the whole of her burden of care.

Half an hour more passed away, and then Adelaide began to grow impatient. She had not yet seen the child, whom she had resolved to love very much, and she had half a mind to go in search of the motherless one and try to win its confidence. But upon second thought she changed her mind; when Mr. Liston was ready, the little girl would be brought forward.

Presently the thought occurred that perhaps Miss Barker was waiting for her to make the first advances; she could not do better than offer her services at once. Adelaide rang the bell, and a domestic promptly answered the summons.

"Tell Miss Barker that if she wishes to see me for any purpose, or if I can assist her in any way, I am at her service," said Mrs. Liston in a pleasant tone.

The girl bowed respectfully and withdrew, but soon made her appearance again with the message, "that Miss Barker was much obliged, but she didn't need any help."

"Ah, I understand," mused the young wife. "She is kindly disposed enough, but probably does not wish to trouble me with care at first; I will try and wait patiently until she sees fit to be confidential. Time works wonders, it is said."

Mr. Liston soon came in, and as he was the same polite, agreeable man as ever, the minutes passed very quickly and pleasantly until the dinner-bell rang.

Adelaide dreaded another stiff, ceremonious, unsoical meal, but contrary to her expectations, she was far less uncomfortable than she had been in the morning. Mr. Liston seemed at ease, and the prim lady opposite him at the head of the table, had parted with a little of her former rigidity.

When the desert was brought on, the gentleman despatched a servant to the nursery after his daughter, who was led in and approached her father in so timid a manner that it was obvious she was not on very intimate terms with him.

"Rosa," he said, placing the child upon his knee, "this lady is your now mother; you must learn to love her very much."

But judging from her frightened and shrinking looks, that desirable result would not be brought about easily; and no coaxing on the part of Adelaide could induce her to relinquish the hand of her nurse, to whom she had run the moment Mr. Liston released her. Rosa was evidently very much afraid of her father, very much in awe of her great-aunt, and greatly attached to her attendant.

"Neither do I far from it; but she could certainly have taken some way less calculated to wound a sensitive nature."

"What would you have, Mrs. Liston?" demanded the gentleman, in a tone of severity.

"Nothing but what is rightfully due," rejoined Adelaide, who thought of the motto, "nothing venture, nothing gain."

"And what may I understand by that?"

"Merely that I think I am entitled to certain rights and privileges as your wife, in the enjoyment of which I should respect myself, and induce my servants to respect me."

For the first time since his marriage, Mr. Liston frowned upon his wife; he paused a moment, and then said :

"I believe I mentioned once before, that you would have little to do with the domestic department. My aunt is both able and willing to take all the responsibility upon herself; and it was settled before my marriage, that she should occupy the same position as heretofore. I see no reason why this arrangement should not be satisfactory, as it certainly relieves you of a laborious duty. Come, Adelaide," he added, with an attempt at playfulness, "do not think I married the pretty Miss Southerland to transform her into a household drudge."

"But in my own home, I—"

"Your own home?" repeated Mr. Liston, slowly.

Adelaide crimsoned. In her mouth the words were comparatively simple, but in his they assumed a stern significance. The hint was palpable enough; she was a portentous bride, and therefore must submit unresistingly to the mandates of one who had conferred upon her the distinction of bearing his name. She feels the full meaning of his last remark, but wounded pride kept her silent. She knew full well that if he would stoop to utter such unwholesome and ungenerous sentiments, there was little hope that he would look at the matter in its true light.

A few moments there was a most embarrassing silence. Mr. Liston looked steadily into the fire and twirled his watch-chain uneasily. Adelaide had displayed more evidences of wounded pride than had the stately Miss Barker. She was fearful he had said rather too much, and it was possible that he had overstepped his mark.

"I am sorry this disagreeable subject was introduced," he observed, at length. "Let us drop it, and not refer to it again. Believe me, Mrs. Liston, there is not the least necessity that it should cause you a moment's uneasiness; most ladies would be glad to be in your situation."

Adelaide doubted this, but she neither said ay or no, and finding she was not inclined to talk, the gentleman left the room, and shortly after was heard to shut the street door.

"What was it that I intended for?" thought our heroine bitterly. "In trying to shun one kind of dependence, I have subjected myself to humiliation, mortification and a new species of slavery. I wanted a home, but what kind of a home have I gained? I have got a handsome husband also, but he has shown himself sadly deficient in those noble and generous qualities which constitute a true man."

When next Mr. and Mrs. Liston met, it was with coldness on both sides. Had there been any genuine affection between the parties, this state of things would not have long continued; but as no such feeling existed on Adelaide's part, she disdained to feign a sentiment to which she was a stranger. As for Mr. Liston, as we have before said, he had fallen in love with Miss Southerland's pretty face and petite figure, and thinking she would make a handsome parlor ornament, or an elegant opera parlor, he had felt a sort of triumph in bearing her off in the face of numberless young and disappointed suitors, who were both jealous and indignant at his success. That his youthful wife would be very pliable, and consult his will and pleasure in all things, he was confident; not for a moment imagining that she would dare assert her rights, which had been made over in full to his aunt, who had lived in his family most of the time since his first marriage, and who had been the means of shortening the days—so his friends asserted—of the former wife.

Mr. Liston was a very sensible man, and Miss Barker had a large share of this trait of character also. He knew that the latter exercised a strict supervision over the servants, and was saving and even parsimonious, never suffering a bit of bread or a piece of meat to pass out of the house which could possibly be put to use.

The table was always spread sparingly, and seldom supplied with luxuries; making, as Adelaide thought, rather a strange contrast to the elegantly furnished drawing-rooms. This disposition accorded well with Mr. Liston's. He made up his mind that no young, frivolous, inexperienced wife should have a chance to waste his property, and put it entirely out of her power to save or spend, by installing Miss Barker sole mistress of his household.

Time wore away. When visited by her relatives or acquaintances, she blushed with mortification at their looks of astonishment, when she took her accustomed seat at the table on the right of the maiden aunt. But Adelaide had few visitors who made more than a casual call, for she had received more than one intimation that much company would not be desirable.

"It made a great deal of work," Miss Barker remarked. "Dirted the carpets, displaced the furniture, littered the spare chambers, and was very expensive. It was far better for people to stay at home and mind their own business."

Our heroine was shrewd enough to understand that the larder would suffer the most, for Miss Barker's niggardliness was becoming more apparent every day. She found it exceedingly difficult to conform to the latter's set, precise notions of neatness; for Adelaide, though possessing a great love of order and system, could not understand why a chair must invariably stand just so many inches from a window, or why it was not as proper to lay a book upon one side as the other. So she moved about, feeling very much as though she was confined in a straight jacket; she must walk in just such a way, for the aunt aversion "that quick steps injured a Brussels, and running up and down stains kicked on the carpet shockingly." If she sat down to the piano to play away her unpleasant reflections, Miss Barker was sure to have a bad headache, which obliged her to touch the keys very lightly, and smoother her fine voice for fear of injuring the lady's nerves. But afterward Adelaide discovered her real motive, by overhearing the remark, "that if the piano was used so much, they should have to hire a tuner by the year." She even grudged the poor girl the solace of music.

Mrs. Liston had been six months married, and during that time her husband had once asked her if she was in need of money. The generosity of her sisters had procured her a handsome bridal outfit, which had obviated the necessity of her applying to him for anything; but as some few articles were now really required, she hoped he would again refer to the subject. This he did not do, and she was forced to make a request from which her pride revolted.

"Ah, yes, ladies do like money, I believe. You had some, I suspect?" he replied, interrogatively.

"A little," was the rejoinder.

"Perhaps ten or fifteen dollars?" continued Mr. Liston, in quite an indifferent manner.

"No one could have known that, unless my

# The Flag of our Union.

223

purse had examined," said Adelaide, pointedly. "I had that amount which I have spent in omnibus fees, and small purchases which I do not need to detail."

"Omnibus fees are useless expenses. I always pay—it is good exercise; and as for knick-knacks, they are of no practical utility and should never be purchased. But, however, here is a bill; try and make a good use of it, Mrs. Liston," and with these words he handed her the very liberal sum of five dollars. Adelaide could hardly believe her eyes; at the least, she expected twenty-five dollars as her first allowance. Looking at it in instant with a mingled expression of surprise and contempt, the cooily returned it, and said with considerable dignity:

"You had better keep it, Mr. Liston. The amount is too small to do me any good."

Mr. Liston was confounded by this unexpected movement and the words which accompanied it, and stood staring at the rejected bill, when Adelaide left the apartment.

The latter entered her own room and sat down to reflect upon what had occurred. "That her husband was penurious to the last degree, she had had ocular proof, although the evidences of plenty and luxury about her were calculated to make this doubtful to the casual observer. But Mrs. Liston was not thus to be deceived by false appearances, and her mortification at the discovery was only equalled by her indignation that her own private property had been exposed to the searching eyes of Miss Barker. It must have been so, else how had her husband ascertained the amount of money her purse contained.

Thus far Mrs. Liston had exercised more forbearance than most people would have done under like circumstances; but she was a woman of spirit, and resolved no longer to tamely submit to a species of espionage and imposition which was fast becoming intolerable. It was not her duty to do so; she was a wife, and should enjoy a wife's privileges. As it was, she had no voice in anything, was narrowly watched, restricted in going and coming, and annoyed daily by the insufferable "whims" of the maiden aunt, who, latterly, had assumed an air of condescension which was much harder to bear than one of dignified importance and superiority.

Adelaide thought of the future; what happiness had it in reserve for her? Present appearances indicated little; for, added to her other unpleasant discoveries, she had remarked conclusive symptoms of an impious, tyrannical disposition in Mr. Liston, which excited fears that he might become more exacting than was agreeable.

Adelaide mused long and painfully respecting the step it was best to take, for spite of her well known love of peace of mind, and, to some extent, her reputation.

While busied with these reflections, a letter was handed her. She scanned the seal closely, and after satisfying herself that no curious fingers had interfered with its smooth surface, opened the missive and read it.

Its contents seemed of absorbing interest; many times she ran her eyes over the clerk like handwriting, while unfeigned pleasure was clearly expressed on her speaking countenance.

"How fortunate!" she thought. "Just at the very time when my need was the greatest. I will hesitate no longer."

Adelaide rose to leave the chamber, after having concealed the precious letter about her person, when, the door being ajar, she heard her own name mentioned by someone in an adjoining room. Influenced by an excusable feeling, she paused.

"Well, I'm sure she bears what I wouldn't!" said a voice, which the lady recognized as belonging to Jenny, the cook.

"Why, I'd take the roof off the house if I was imposed on the way she is. Miss Barker treats her shamefully."

"So she does; but Miss Liston hasn't got many spunk, or she'd make a fuss about it. When I get married and go to keep 'house, you don't catch me a sittin' weekly down to one side of the table, waitin' till Miss Importance puts a piece of bread and butter on my plate!" exclaimed her companion, a girl who had been in the family but a week or two, but who had used her eyes and ears to good advantage in that short space of time.

"Well, the poor woman can't help herself. She is a little young thing and hasn't got any mother to go with her troubles, and if she had two or three, neither wouldn't be a match for Barker. Keep on the right side of her, and you'll fare a great deal better," added Jenny, by way of advice.

"I know, I know! Make believe you don't like Miss Liston, and be sure to tell Barker who comes to see her when she's been out?" added the other, in a meaning tone.

"You are brighter than I thought for Ann," rejoined the cook, with a laugh. "But we mustn't stand here talking, for there's a great ironing to do-to-day," she added.

"And a heap of lace to do up, I s'pose," said Ann. "I do hate to iron flounce work."

"Do as I do, then—look out for your own comfort first. Let 'em lay; Barker won't find fault if you only take care that her things are done up nicely."

"Understand," returned Ann, slowly. "Miss Liston's aint no consequence!"

"Find that out yourself, ain't agoin' to bother myself about what don't concern me," and the cook marched down the stairs, followed up by Ann.

Mrs. Liston sighed. She felt degraded in the eyes of the domestics, who, while expressing pity and sympathy, did not hesitate to speak in disparaging terms of her want of spirit; which, however, she determined they should have no occasion to do again.

Since reading the letter, Adelaide had unconsciously assumed a more dignified step, and a more assured mien, and when she walked into the kitchen an hour later, both Ann and Jenny stared at her changed appearance. She did not act like one who had come to beg a favor, in a subdued tone, or in any way conduct herself as though she was not first and foremost.

"Girls," she said, in a kind, but firm voice,

"I find I am nearly destitute of clean collars and starches. Where they not found among the family washing?"

Ann replied in the affirmative.

"Then why have they not been ironed, and brought to the room?" she continued.

"Because the girls have had something else to do, besides ironing half a dozen pairs of under-stoofes and other useless things," replied Miss Barker, who stood at a small table weighing out materials for the lace—that lady never trusted the domestics near the sugar-bucket, egg-box, or butter-box, but kept the key of the closet which contained them in her pocket.

Mr. Liston took no more notice of the remark than she did of the person who made it.

"I am sorry they have been neglected, for I need them," she quietly went on to say. "Be kind enough to do them up neatly before attending to the other ironing, for it is possible they may be wanted this afternoon. Do not oblige me to speak of the matter again."

The girl looked at Miss Barker inquiringly; but it was needless, for Adelaide waited for no reply.

Now either Jenny or Ann—though the latter hated fligree work—would willingly have done this reasonable and pleasantly preferred request, had not a peremptory order to the contrary from the maiden aunt prevented them from so doing; consequently, when Adelaide's belt rang after dinner, and she mildly asked if her wishes had been complied with, Ann, much confused and hesitating a great deal, finally said, that "she had been told not to touch them."

Making no comments, Mrs. Liston dismissed the girl, after desiring her to bring up whatever articles belonged to her, and among the rest the unironed lace and muslins. When this had been done, the closed and locked her door, and stepped into the parlor where Mr. Liston was reading, while Miss Barker was looking out of the window. Adelaide made a few remarks, but as the aunt deigned nothing but flat monosyllables in reply, and the gentleman did not raise his eyes from his paper, she concluded that silence on her part would prove the most acceptable.

That her husband was thinking of the act of which she had been guilty in rejecting the offered bill, was sufficiently obvious; his brow was clouded, and his manner grave and displeased. But Adelaide rejoiced in a just cause and did not fear. She took up a magazine and tried to read; but her truant thoughts so constantly recurred to subjects of a more personal nature, that she gave up the attempt, at the same time wishing Miss Barker would leave the room. This she soon after did, and Mr. Liston immediately relinquished his paper.

"Aunt Myra is much displeased," he said, seriously.

"With whom?" inquired Adelaide, returning his searching glance with one equally as steady.

"Yourself, it seems."

"How have I offended?" she continued, not in the least perturbed.

"By interfering with her business, if I must speak in such plain terms. It is strange, Adelaide, that you—"

"Stop, if you please, Mr. Liston!" interrupted the wife, in a firm, yet respectful voice. "One thing at a time. Instead of my interfering with your aunt, she has in the most impudent and unjustifiable manner, and in the presence of the domestics, meddled with affairs exclusively my own."

The broad brow of the gentleman again contracted.

"This is the story," he resumed; "you went to the kitchen—where, by the way, it is entirely unnecessary that you should go—stopped the girls in their work, told them to omit the family ironing, which was waiting to be done, and immediately starch and iron a large quantity of laces, muslins, etc., of your own soiling; and this too, without consulting my aunt, who stood near by. I do not wonder that she took offence."

"It is not a pleasant task, but I must plead my own case, even in the face of a prejudiced witness. I did not stop the girls in their work, or tell them to omit the family ironing; but I did very mildly request them to attend to a duty which had long been neglected, and which, to me, was of more consequence than the smoothing of a basket of table linen; because the latter articles were not immediately wanted, while I needed the others this very afternoon. Thus, you see, there are two sides to a story."

"Yet I do not perceive that yours differs materially from the other. You admit, I believe, the chief point; that you thought, is not essential to the strength of the argument," rejoined Mr. Liston, with slight sarcasm.

"I am willing to admit that I gave an order; but that I had a right to do, and it should have been obeyed."

"My aunt saw fit—"

"I do not recognize your aunt's authority over my actions," retorted the wife, fearlessly.

"I am no longer a child. I am a woman, and flatter myself that I have a share common to judgment and discretion. It is not for me to go to her—she should come to me."

"Aunt Myra go to a girl of twenty years for advice?" exclaimed Mr. Liston, trying to laugh heartily.

"You misapprehend me, and I believe possibly. I did not say advice," she added.

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